



S.K.S. SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE (LONDON) – BAL YUVAK MANDAL

Westfield Lane, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 9EA Est. 1966 Charity Reg. No. 271034

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EUTHANASIA DISCUSSION

Note: It may be more beneficial for BYM members if this topic was discussed in a debating format. Some research will need to be done by the leader in order to have an informed understanding of what euthanasia is and where the debate currently stands in the western world. The discussion should not be confined to the points made below, and should be used as guidelines only.

What is Euthanasia?

Euthanasia = good death (in Ancient Greek); the practice of ending a life in a painless manner.

As of 2008, some forms of euthanasia are legal in Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Switzerland, the U.S. states of Oregon and Washington, the Autonomous Community of Andalusia (Spain), and Thailand.

Forms of Euthanasia

- By Consent (voluntary euthanasia)
- Without consent (involuntary euthanasia) - conducted where an individual makes a decision for another person incapable of doing so.

Means

- Passively - the withholding of common treatments (such as antibiotics, pain medications, or surgery) or the distribution of a medication (such as morphine) to relieve pain, knowing that it may also result in death.
- Non-active euthanasia - the withdrawing of life support.
- Active euthanasia - the use of lethal substances or forces to kill.

Arguments for Euthanasia

- The European Convention on Human Rights gives a person the right to die; the rights to privacy and freedom of belief give a person the right to decide how and when to die.
- English law already acknowledges that people have the right to die; the Suicide Act (1961) made it legal for people to take their own lives.
 - This doesn't necessarily acknowledge a right to die.
 - it could simply acknowledge that you can't punish someone for succeeding at suicide
 - and that it's inappropriate to punish someone so distressed that they want to take their own life.
- Euthanasia happens anyway - better to make it legal and regulate it properly
- Helping to end a painful life a person is performing a good deed and so fulfilling their moral obligations.
- People should not be forced to stay alive
- Choice is a fundamental principle for liberal democracies and free market systems.
- Quality of Life: The pain and suffering a person feels during a disease, even with pain relievers, can be incomprehensible to a person who has not gone through it.



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Even without considering the physical pain, it is often difficult for patients to overcome the emotional pain of losing their independence.

- Economic costs and human resources: Today in many countries there is a shortage of hospital space. The energy of doctors and hospital beds could be used for people whose lives could be saved instead of continuing the life of those who want to die which increases the general quality of care and shortens hospital waiting lists. It is a burden to keep people alive past the point they can contribute to society, especially if the resources used could be spent on a curable ailment.

Arguments against euthanasia

- Euthanasia is against the word and will of God
- Voluntary euthanasia is the start of a slippery slope that leads to involuntary euthanasia and the killing of people who are thought undesirable
- Accepting euthanasia accepts that some lives (those of the disabled or sick) are worth less than others
- Euthanasia affects other people's rights, not just those of the patient
- Allowing euthanasia will lead to less good care for the terminally ill
 - Allowing euthanasia undermines the commitment of doctors and nurses to saving lives
 - Euthanasia may become a cost-effective way to treat the terminally ill
 - Euthanasia undermines the motivation to provide good care for the dying, and good pain relief
- Euthanasia exposes vulnerable people to pressure to end their lives
 - Moral pressure on elderly relatives by selfish families
 - Moral pressure to free up medical resources
 - Patients who are abandoned by their families may feel euthanasia is the only solution
- Euthanasia is against the word and will of God
 - To kill oneself, or to get someone else to do it for us, is to deny God, and to deny God's rights over our lives and his right to choose the length of our lives and the way our lives end.
- Dying is just one of the tests that God sets for human beings, and that the way we react to it shows the sort of person we are, and how deep our faith and trust in God is.
- Proper palliative care makes euthanasia unnecessary
 - Palliative care is physical, emotional and spiritual care for a dying person when cure is not possible. It includes compassion and support for family and friends.
 - Competent palliative care may well be enough to prevent a person feeling any need to contemplate euthanasia.
 - The key to successful palliative care is to treat the patient as a person, not as a set of symptoms, or medical problems.
 - The World Health Organisation states that palliative care affirms life and regards dying as a normal process; it neither hastens nor postpones death; it provides relief from pain and suffering; it integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of the patient.
- A doctor should not accept a patient's request for euthanasia since this will cause the soul and body to be separated at an unnatural time. The result will damage the karma of both doctor and patient.



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- Euthanasia cannot be allowed because it breaches the teaching of ahimsa (doing no harm).

The following websites will be useful in your research:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthanasia>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/euthanasia/>

<http://www.dignityindying.org.uk/>

Lord Swaminarayan on Euthanasia

(This should be stressed at the end of the discussion)

Shikshapatri Shloka 11

“My disciples shall never kill intentionally any living creature, not even small insects such as lice or bugs.”

- “NA HIMSYAT SARVABHUTANI” = never kill any living creature how ever big or small.
- It is said you can carry out prayaschit for unintentionally killing or harming a creature but there is no such prayaschit written for intentionally killing or harming a creature.
- From this it is clear that Euthanasia is NOT approved by Bhagwan what ever the reason; which ever way you look at it, it will always amount to murder in the eyes of the Lord.
- Helping someone die does not free them of pain, it in fact releases into limbo (i.e. they are unable to progress to Akshardham) or they are sent to Yam where they are stuck for what will seem an eternity (with far worse pain).
- It may be difficult to digest but we must accept that whatever pain and suffering someone is going through, it is all happening at the will of the Supreme Being.
- Every scripture (e.g. Bhagwat Gita, Bhagwatam, Satsangi Jeevan and even Shikshapatri), illustrates that what we go through in this life is connected to our karmas (actions) in a previous life.